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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 001978

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE, NSC FOR ABRAMS/PASCUAL/RAMCHAND

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TAGS: KWBG PREL PTER IS EG JO SY YM SA OA

SUBJECT: ABBAS TO ATTEND RECONCILIATION MEETING IN CAIRO;
HAMAS RESERVATIONS EXPECTED TO IMPEDE PROGRESS

REF: JERUSALEM 1934

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Summary. Senior Fatah and President's Office contacts told ConGenOffs that President Abbas will participate in the opening session of the November 9-10 reconciliation meeting in Cairo, joined by Arab Foreign Ministers and the Arab League Secretary-General. Hamas Politburo chief Khalid Misha'l will also reportedly attend, but Abbas has no plans to meet separately with Hamas leaders.

PLO Secretary-General Yasir Abd Rabbo told the Consul General October 28 that Hamas has proposed at least 14 changes to the draft reconciliation proposal (discussed Reftel), and that the GOE has refused to incorporate these changes. Abd Rabbo said the general meeting will devolve to six committees which are unlikely to bridge substantial gaps between PLO and Hamas positions. End summary.

Abbas Will Attend Opening Session
Along with Arab Foreign Ministers

¶12. (C) Senior Fatah Revolutionary Council (FRC) members Azzam al-Ahmad and Ahmad Abd al-Rahman told PolFSN October 28 that President Abbas will participate in the opening session of the reconciliation meeting in Cairo, and may attend other sessions depending on progress and attendance by Arab League representatives. Al-Ahmad and Abd al-Rahman said Abu Mazen is attending the session at Egyptian President Husni Mubarak's request, and that Egyptian Foreign Minister Ahmad Abu al-Gheit, Syrian FM Walid Muallim, Qatari FM Sh. Hamad bin Jasim al-Thani, Yemeni FM Abu Bakr al-Qurbi, Jordanian FM Salah al-Din al-Bashir, Saudi Arabian FM Prince Sa'ud al-Faysal, and Arab League Secretary-General Amr Musa are expected to be present. Other contacts in the PA President's Office mentioned that they assume Damascus-based Hamas Politburo chief Khalid Misha'l will attend, but they noted that Abbas has no plans to meet separately with Misha'l or other Hamas leaders.

¶13. (C) Al-Ahmad and Abd al-Rahman said Abbas will not participate as a faction leader but will attend as the PA President and head of the PLO, recognized as the Palestinian people's sole representative. Abd al-Rahman said President Mubarak urged President Abbas to attend the opening session in a one-on-one meeting on October 27, and Abbas agreed to attend on the condition that Amr Musa and Arab foreign ministers join the meeting. He added that Abbas has met with Musa and several Arab heads of state in recent days to build an Arab umbrella to support his positions on factional dialogue, especially his condition that any new PA government conform to Quartet principles and not result in the reimposition of "the siege," and that the PLO's authority be preserved. Abd al-Rahman said Abbas has no confidence that

Hamas will alter its political positions and thus wants Arab support when the PLO asserts that Hamas is responsible for failure of reconciliation talks.

¶4. (C) President's Office contacts say Fatah's representatives at the meeting (joining People's Party, PFLP, DFLP and other PLO elements) will be:

-- Fatah Central Committee (FCC) member Nabil Sha'ath, as Fatah's delegation chairman;

-- FCC member (Gaza-based) Zakaria al-Agha;

-- FRC members Ahmad Abd al-Rahman, Azzam al-Ahmad, and Ibrahim Abu-al-Naja;

-- Gaza Strip Governors Abdallah Abu Samhadanah and Usama al-Fara.

Hamas Has "At Least 14 Reservations" to GOE Paper, But Will Attend

¶5. (C) PLO Secretary-General Yasir Abd Rabbo told the Consul General October 28 that Hamas has proposed at least 14 changes to the draft reconciliation paper (discussed Reftel), and that the GOE has refused to incorporate these changes. He said the PLO has sought only two suggested edits that entail acceptance of the PLO's political program and status as the sole Palestinian representative body. Abd Rabbo said the GOE intends to secure approval of the paper at the reconciliation meeting. The GOE hopes to get credit for

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successfully bringing Palestinian factions together on the basis of the reconciliation paper, Abd Rabbo said. However, the task of implementing the Egyptian paper will then pass to six committees, which Abd Rabbo believes will be unable to bridge the gaps between PLO and Hamas positions.

Comment

¶6. (C) President Abbas and Fatah leaders seem pleased thus far with the GOE's facilitation of talks and rejection of Hamas amendments. Hamas has not yet confirmed its participation in the meetings or named its delegation, and public statements by former Hamas PM Ismayil Haniyah and diaspora leaders October 29-30 indicate Hamas is feeling pressured and pushing hard to incorporate its changes into the Egyptian paper.

WALLES